

**Snohomish Sustainable Lands Strategy
Written Update**

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Proposed Action: Lunchtime Presentation

Summary:

In 2008 the Snohomish County agricultural advisory board and farm bureau, noting 5000 acres of potential impacts to designated agricultural land from restoration projects, sought a moratorium to restoration projects until offsets & protections for agricultural lands were in place. During the same time tribes & restoration interests noted that fish stocks are not viable and that the tribes can assert treaty rights and Federal statutory protections under the endangered species act and the clean water act. To help resolve this rising conflict, in June 2010, County, State, Tribes, and agricultural leads launched the Snohomish Sustainable Lands Strategy to “generate net gains” for farms, fish, and tribes. An 8-member executive committee governs the SLS with 4 representatives from agriculture and 4 from restoration. During the quick 6-month schedule to develop the SLS, regulatory models were considered, however, the group chose a non-regulatory coordination & a net gain for both agriculture and restoration as the preferred approach.

Phase 1 of the SLS was completed in March 2011 and signed by the executive committee. This phase provided the framework which:

- uses the existing foundation of watershed plans, ag studies and GIS and integrates these information points to provide a solid technical understanding at the landscape scale.
- provides avenues for achieving net gains for both restoration and agriculture including meeting restoration goals set in salmon recovery plans,
- respects treaty rights and other cultural uses
- is broadly supported by restoration, agriculture, and others.

SLS has been funded by the county, tribes and PSP, and demonstrates a true “Partnership” approach. Supporting the SLS work empowers local elected officials and decision makers and builds a political will that supports multiple goals and decisions that are beneficial for Puget Sound recovery. This work has been founded on building trust between the agricultural, tribal, and other restoration interests and others within the county and has built a system that helps to align the multiple interests.

Next Steps:

Phase 2 of SLS will be complete by October 31, 2011. Phase 2 will provide an implementation framework to advance by formalizing the SLS structure, broadening the stakeholder group, and developing and proposing policy to create the connections specified in the phase 1 work. This phase will also develop strategic plans for getting to net gain actions for fish and farms. Finally, these actions identified in strategic plans will be prioritized to help sharpen the focus on the most important near term actions.